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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case tudy documents how one student teacher was able to enrich her understa ding of what it means to work in a multicultural environment. The study e amined what the student teacher considered to be culturally responsive teaching and how she described culturally responsive teaching. As par of a larger study, she read 12 teaching cases on culturally relevant teaching and wrote a well-remembered event (WRE) in order to gain understa ding of her beliefs about culturally responsive teaching. This led to the reation of categories and concepts that enabled her to engage in reflective discourse on issues related to diversity. The categories were interaction, own rship, accommodation, and opportunity. The student teacher noted three reas ns for her struggle to incorporate culturally relevant teaching techni ues: not taking the chance to try her ideas, being prevented from trying he ideas, and trying the ideas with no noticeable student response. The st dy shows that teaching cases offer a powerful tool for giving voice to p eservice teachers and provide a means for preservice teachers to discuss ways that these beliefs may be enacted in future practice. The WREs and teac ing cases provided the student teacher with the means for personal reflec ion. (Contains 32 references.) (SM)

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Teacher Education: Preparing Teachers for Diversity

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Teacher Education: Preparing Teachers for Diversity

Our nation's teachers do not resemble our nation's students. While there is an obvious contrast in age, and experience, there is a deeper difference of culture that divides the teacher from the student. That variance, if not spanned with a bridge of acknowledgement and understanding, will hold the students in their powerless place as educators continue to shake their heads and mumble about 'kids these days'. On the other hand, when a connection is forged between the two segments of a classroom that allows each group to be respected and valued, both the student and the teacher find themselves learning. This cultural bridging is a necessity for both today's teacher and the teachers of tomorrow.

The student population is projected to expand in terms of enrollment figures as well as in terms of diversity (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1997). This diversity encompasses an array of dimensions such as race and language. One example of the expansion of numbers can be found in the growth rates for people of color who are outpacing the growth rates of the Anglo population. It is projected that by the year 2020, if America's current growth rate trends continue, students of color will account for nearly 46% of school age children (Banks, 1991). Another essential area of growth is that of linguistic diversity.

Language continues to play a major part in schools with over 5 million students speaking a native language other than English. In addition, 14% of the total school age population, or 7.9 million students, live in a household where a non-English language is being spoken. These numbers are expected to increase following the clearly established trend in the reported growth in numbers of language-minority students in school between 1990 and 1991 (National Association Bilingual Education [NABE], 1993). This linguistic diversity is another way student growth rates are expanding.

In sharp contrast to this diverse student body is the 'typical American teacher' who is a white woman with two children teaching in a suburban elementary school (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996). The current teaching force is 90% Anglo (Hadaway, 1993), and the face of the future teaching population does not currently appear to be changing. Teacher education candidates, who are predominantly Anglo and female, have been characterized as 'culturally insular' (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard). The concept of cultural insularity conveys the idea that teacher candidates in the United States are predominantly married women who are of Euro-American descent; from the middle class, and from rural or suburban communities (e.g., Feiman-Nemser & Remillard; McCall, 1995).

The Research About Teacher Education [RATE] studies indicate that Anglo females are over-represented among prospective teachers (Howey & Zimpher, 1996). Seventy-five percent of prospective secondary teachers and 93% of those preparing to teach in the elementary schools are women. The RATE studies also show that these women are being prepared by a faculty dominated by white men. This man is typically in his late forties or early fifties and tenured at either the full or associate professor level. He has been at his current place of employment for more than 15 years and has taught for a minimum of three years at the K-12 level (Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996). This under-representation is significant in that the reproduction of this white, male culture is predominant at our nation's universities of teacher education.

There has been growing awareness among teacher educators for the need to prepare teachers for increasingly diverse classrooms and schools. Teacher education currently takes place in about 1,300 Schools, Colleges and Departments of Education [SCDEs] (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996). SCDEs are generally located in culturally homogeneous

communities (Hadaway, 1993). With regard to SCDE programs, there are those who believe that we need to move beyond no training or cursory training regarding diversity (Irvine, 1993). Most graduates from teacher preparation programs "...know little about the cultural traits, behaviors, values and attitudes different ethnic minority groups bring to the classroom and how they affect the ways these students act and react to instructional situations" (Gay, 1993, p. 182). In addition, many preservice teachers are unaware of their personal histories and how those experiences may affect their work in the classroom. "If we as teachers never become aware of the cultural limits that restrict us, how will our students learn to transcend them?" (Polites, 1993, p. 54).

Related Research

Although often discussed as an area needing to be addressed in preservice teacher programs, research in the area of diversity training is emerging at best (Zeichner, 1996). The major responsibility for preparing teachers to work in diverse classrooms falls into one of two approaches. The first of these is the infusion approach, which places the responsibility for introducing multicultural materials and methods equally among the courses required in the preparation program. This method is preferred (Grant & Sleeter, 1985), but is not the most common. The most dominant approach used by teacher educators is the segregated approach, which places the training in one isolated course or program that is often optional for teacher candidates.

Zeichner and Hoeft (1996) offer details of the courses found in current teacher preparation programs. Courses on multiculturalism typically approach the instruction as either culture specific or as culture general. Culture specific materials look for the trends and issues that can be attributed to particular races and genders, while the culture general approach

attempts to prepare teachers to mold teaching strategies and techniques to the student regardless of that student's culture (Zeichner & Hoeft). One danger discussed in the use of culture specific methods, for example, is the possibility that showing trends found in a particular ethnic group may reinforce stereotypes already held by the teacher candidate or perhaps instill new prejudices (Haberman, 1991). Villegas (1991) suggests that the culture general approach is a preferred method for considering diversity in the classroom, as all people are members of multiple groups and not merely defined by any one descriptor.

Regardless of if the approach is based on an infusion or a segregated model, and is culture specific or culture general, training typically falls into one of two categories as to how the techniques are modeled. Both models study culture, as opposed to interacting with different cultures. However, the two approaches of culture specific and culture general have dramatically different results (Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Gomez (1996) suggests that as a 'best practice' for diversity training, students must go into the field to experience meaningful relationships with people different from themselves. In addition, it cannot be assumed that minority teachers are culturally aligned with their students (Gay, 1993). Nor can it be assumed that minority teachers can take their own experiences and translate that cultural knowledge into teaching practices that are culturally sensitive (Montecinos, 1994).

Nationally, school districts and teacher preparation programs alike are calling for an increased level of diversity awareness, and therefore teacher preparation programs have answered with various courses and integrated attempts to adequately prepare preservice teachers with the attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to work effectively with an increasing diverse student population. Although there are certain agreed upon elements for productive preparation of teachers for diverse settings, there is a great deal that is not yet known

about both the elements of successful teaching across cultures and the process of preparing teachers for cultural diversity.

How can culturally insular teacher candidates learn to teach in a diverse classroom if the teacher educators are, themselves, predominantly monocultural with little experience in teaching in a diverse setting (Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996; Haberman, 1991)? It can be done and must be documented so both those working with preservice teachers and those supporting inservice teachers have a model of how to explore the issues of a culturally relevant pedagogy in a setting where the instructor is modeling these same methods.

Research Design

A detailed description of the development of one teacher's beliefs is a valuable addition to the current knowledge in the field of the cultural diversity preparation of teachers. This interpretive qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998) documents one unique but illustrative case from an emic perspective which provides rich details of the experience of how one student was able to enrich her understandings of what it means to work in a multicultural environment. This research design was guided by a constructivist framework that builds on the participant's knowledge using analytical tools such as the use of well-remembered events (Carter, 1990) and teaching cases to examine attitudes and values (Shulman, 1992). An additional consideration was that the participant was currently attending a large southwestern university's initial teacher preparation program that embraces the infusion approach (Grant & Sleeter, 1985) of multicultural education.

The participant is a nontraditional student who is going back to college as a post-baccalaureate to obtain her teaching certificate. Karen is a twenty-four year old secondary English major enrolled in her final semester at a major research university in the Southwest.

She describes herself in an introductory letter sent home to parents of her students during her student teaching experience. "While I am new to full-time teaching, I have substituted extensively in the past…for almost three years I've been teaching test preparation courses…for a private company. These experiences, with my observations and professional coursework, have informed my teaching philosophy."

Methods

The research questions guiding this study were (1) What does a preservice teacher consider to be culturally responsive teaching? and (2) How does a preservice teacher describe culturally responsive teaching? As part of a larger study (see Rees, 2000), the participant read teaching cases and wrote a well-remembered event in order to gain understandings into her beliefs of teaching that is culturally responsive. These analytic tools led to categories and concepts that enabled the participant to engage in reflective discourse surrounding the issues of diversity.

Well-Remembered Events

Carter (1995) describes "story" as a way that teachers make sense of their craft. In considering this type of framework, stories become a way of meaning-making for preservice teachers as they enter into the classroom and begin to process all that they are experiencing. Specifically, Carter (1993) provides an analytical tool for preservice teachers to interpret these stories from the classroom. This tool is called a well-remembered event [WRE] (Carter, 1990) and provides both a retelling of the story and a discussion of the meaning imbedded in the events.

As Carter and Doyle (1995) assert, preconceptions should be regarded "…as the basic resource novices having in learning to teach" (p. 194). There are different techniques for using

personal narrative in teacher education; such as education-related life history that includes metaphors and WREs (Carter & Doyle). A WRE "...is not a complete record of what teacher knows about teaching. It is, rather, a record of an interpretation of a particular instance. Moreover, patterns of interpretations over time furnish a compelling picture of what a teacher knows and how that knowledge is organized for use" (Carter, 1994, p. 236).

A WRE is, at one level, an incident or episode that a teacher observes or experiences in a school setting and considers it to be particularly salient or memorable (Carter, 1990; see also Carter, 1995; Carter & Doyle, 1995; Carter & Gonzalez, 1993; Gonzalez & Carter, 1996). It is a three part paper: (1) description of the event; (2) statement of the issues that the event raises/analysis; (3) statement of the sense the student has made of the event relative to his/her learning to teach process; what they learned (e.g., Carter).

In a study using the analytical tool of WREs, the data spoke "... somewhat disparagingly about preservice teachers' lack of attention to diversity" (Carter, 1994, p. 251). In the aggregation across eight cases, diversity received less attention in students' WREs as compared to management and curriculum (Carter, 1994). Additionally, student teachers were concerned that they did not know how to deal with diverse student abilities which was a theme in the interviews of student teachers (Gonzalez & Carter, 1996). WREs "...offer a useful strategy for gaining access to student teachers' classroom knowledge...The method warrants further development and exploration in research on teachers' conceptions" (Carter & Gonzalez, 1993, p. 231).

Teaching Cases

Teaching cases can also be used to expose and explore thinking related to educational issues. Cases afford the participant time and consideration in reacting to the events offered.

With a strong history of use in developing the knowledge of doctors and lawyers, it seems only logical that education would also employ this learning tool as a means of bridging theory and practice. With regard to the processes and opportunities in learning to teach, Feiman-Nemser and Remillard (1996) make reference to the notions put forth by cognitive psychologists. Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) posit that "by ignoring the situated nature of cognition, education defeats its own goal of providing useable, robust knowledge" (p. 32).

There are means of promoting situated cognition in teacher education. "Advocates of case-based teacher education see the use of cases as one way to situate teacher learning in problems of practice" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996, p. 83). "Cases and case methods represent one of the most vigorous developments within the field of program pedagogy in teacher education" (Carter & Anders, 1996, p. 582). Specifically, the use of cases can also influence sensitivity toward cultural diversity. Using cases to discuss the experiences of others can introduce new perspectives and realities that help the preservice teachers understand others (Shulman, 1992).

Findings

For purposes of this study, 12 teaching cases were adapted from Ladson-Billings' (1994) work in culturally relevant teaching. Ten of these teaching cases were based upon what Ladson-Billings considers to be culturally responsive teaching events. The other two teaching case adaptations were attempts that fell short of multicultural best practices and therefore served as non-examples of culturally relevant teaching. These teaching cases afforded Karen the opportunity to critically examine her diversity beliefs as they occur in the classroom.

The participant read all 12 teaching cases (see Rees, 2000) and then voiced her initial reactions to each case. The two teaching cases, which Ladson-Billings (1994) would regard as

non-examples, were identified by the participant as "Tokenism" because they broached the issue of multiculturalism but did not serve as incidents that went beyond this surface level. The other 10 teaching cases were then sorted into categories that Karen generated to describe the themes she perceived to be common to that grouping. She then described the categories as: Interaction, Ownership, Accommodation, and Opportunity. This use of teaching cases enabled this rich description of Karen's beliefs to unfold.

Each of these categories yielded richly complex descriptions (see Rees, 2000). Providing explanations for each of the four categories is beyond the scope of this paper. As an example, however, opportunity can be defined as seizing the moment, challenging perceptions, and teaching reflection. Seizing the moment occurs when the teacher takes the opportunity to interrupt the lesson to address issues as they emerge. Challenging perceptions occurs when the teacher asks students to determine the validity of their beliefs which can be done by teaching students how to reflect. These rich descriptions were given in response to the teaching cases the participant described as opportunity. While the participant could verbally describe her beliefs about the cases with ease and in an articulate fashion, there was a contrast evidenced in her ability to enact these beliefs during her student teaching.

The WRE that the participant wrote, which followed the three-part format (Carter, 1990), served as an opportunity for the participant to explore her awkwardness and struggle via reflective writing. While classically the description section of a WRE features one salient or memorable event, for purposes of this study, the participant was asked to write a description of a typical class period in which she was currently student teaching. The second section of the WRE was the analysis portion. It was within this section that the participant used the categories that she had generated in the teaching cases. The categories of interaction,

ownership, accommodation, opportunity and avoiding tokenism were refined in respect to her current teaching practices. In other words, the analysis section enabled Karen to describe what happened when her theories were placed into action.

Karen is struggling to successfully incorporate the culturally relevant teaching techniques she has previously identified. Although she has found that these difficulties have appeared at different times and for different reasons, the participant cites three general reasons for her struggle. These reasons include: not taking the chance to try her ideas, being prevented from trying the ideas, and trying the ideas with no noticeable student response. These reasons explain the participant's struggle with the implementation of her philosophy of using culture (see Rees, 2000).

The final section of the WRE, implications, served as an opportunity for the participant to explain why she believed she was having difficulties in enacting her theories of culturally responsive teaching.

Significance

Although cases are often used as a means of connecting practice to theory or as a means to influence sensitivity to cultural diversity, this study shows that teaching cases offer a powerful tool for giving voice to preservice teacher beliefs. In addition, teaching cases provide a means for preservice teachers to discuss ways in which these beliefs may be enacted in future practice. The WRE enables preservice teachers to describe meaning behind events, and provides an opportunity to discuss future teaching practice. Specifically, these two analytical tools, WREs and teaching cases, provided the participant in this study with the means for personal reflection.

These tools served as the bridge from theory to practice that is necessary in effective teacher education. In searching for ways to connect preservice teachers' prior knowledge to the world outside of themselves, we must use analytical tools such as these to provide the scaffolding for reflection to occur. The students in our nation's classrooms do not resemble our future teaching population. Therefore, this type of reflection is necessary to ignite the conversation of what may be considered a best practice for narrowing the gap of understanding. With this scaffold in place, preservice teachers, despite their own background or culture, can be equiped with reflective tools for culturally responsive teaching.

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